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ABSTRACT

The document discusses the decrease of student scores on the citizenship section of the statewide Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment (EQA). The document presents an overview of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education goals, describes behaviors that EQA measures, and provides sample questions for fifth, eighth, and eleventh-grade students. Behaviors are categorized according to a sense of the welfare and dignity of others, respect for law and authority, and personal responsibility and integrity. Fifth-grade students respond with yes, no, or maybe to statements such as: I would make fun of someone who played a game poorly; or I would throw snowballs at a passing car if I knew I wouldn't get caught. Eighth and eleventh-grade students are asked to respond to hypothetical situations such as observing someone shoplifting. Results of the EQA illustrate the greatest decrease in scores from 1974 to 1976 in the areas of responsibility and integrity, with respect for law and authority and welfare and dignity of others also decreasing. The author stresses that the test is both valid and reliable; thus the instrument itself cannot account for the decline. Also the suggestion that students are more reflective and have a tendency to select the "maybe" answer is not supported by data. Suggested causes for decreasing scores include the fact that students watch over 17,000 hours of television by the time they graduate: unions, minority groups, and politicians who commit crimes and are exonerated through plea-bargaining do not set a socially responsible example; and the divorce rate has decreased the traditional role of the family. (Author/KC)

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ARE COMMONWEALTH STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS?

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ARE COMMONWEALTH STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS?

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The author comments on the Pennsylvania state assessment program (Educational Quality Assessment, EQA), which is perhaps the only statwide testing program measuring both the cognitive and the affective domains. Responsible citizenship, or more specifically, "habits and attitudes related to responsible citizenship," is one of the affective goals addressed by EQA. There is general agreement that responsible citizenship is a desirable mission of the public schools, but there is far from agreement about its definition. Knowledge about government and laws, involvement in the political process, law-and-order-related behaviors, respect for authority, concern for the welfare of others, and responsibility for actions are some of the more commonly mentioned components of citizenship. Pennsylvania's definition currently includes only the last four. From 1974 through 1976 about a half million students in several thousand schools in Pennsylvania were tested on, among other areas, various indices of citizenship. The results clearly showed a continuing decline in scores on the citizenship measures. The reasons for this decline are unclear. However, there are correlates from which hypotheses might be made, several of which are discussed in detail.

Quality education should help every child acquire the habits and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship--at least the Pennsylvania State Board of Education believes it should. They are not alone. Diverse groups, including PTAs, civic groups, and educators (and even a group of shoppers at a shopping mall), agree that responsible citizenship

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[1]The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and no official endorsement by the Pennsylvania Department of Education should be inferred.

should be one of the two highest priority goals for schools (Guerriero, 1975). (The other top priority goal is the self-esteem of children.) These groups and individuals have not turned against the back-to-basics movement. What they are saying is: "My first concern is that my child become a good citizen and, second in importance, I want my child to feel good about himself/herself and be self-confident. Then I will worry about the reading and calculating skills."

The educational goals of citizenship and basic skills are, in fact, not mutually exclusive. There is considerable research to show, for example, that students with high self-esteem tend to do well academically, and, relatedly, students who do well academically tend to have high self-esteem.

What are Pennsylvania's other goals of quality education, and where did they come from?[2] As a result of a 1963 legislative Act mandating that the Pennsylvania Department of Education measure the quality of education offered in the public schools, the State Board developed, formulated, and subsequently approved the following statement, entitled "Ten Goals of Quality Education." While the goals were not listed in rank order, school districts were encouraged to rate them according to their special concerns. Such a process produced the priorities noted above, with similar findings reported when using other ranking processes.

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[2]The reader should be aware that this paper predates a recent revision of Pennsylvania's educational goals. Citizenship remains as one of the goals on the newly formulated list.

The statement read that quality education should:

I Help every child acquire the greatest possible understanding of himself or herself and appreciation of his or her worthiness as a member of society.

II Help every child acquire understanding and appreciation of persons belonging to other social, cultural and ethnic groups.

III Help every child acquire, to the fullest possible extent, mastery of basic skills in the use of words and numbers.

IV Help every child acquire a positive attitude toward the learning process.

V Help every child acquire the habits and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship.

VI Help every child acquire good health habits and an understanding of the conditions necessary for maintaining of physical and emotional well-being.

VII Give every child opportunity and encouragement to be creative in one or more fields of endeavor.

VIII Help every child understand the opportunities open to him or her to prepare for a productive life and help each child to take full advantage of these opportunities.

IX Help every child to understand and appreciate as much as possible of human achievement in the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities and the arts.

X Help every child to prepare for a world of rapid change and unforeseeable demands in which continuing education throughout life should be a normal expectation. (Education Testing Service, 1965, pp. 10-14)

A recent Gallup Poll asked respondents if they would favor school instruction dealing with moral behavior but avoiding moralizing and preaching -- perhaps by modeling behaviors. Of the responses, 79% favored such instruction, 15% opposed it, and 6% gave no answer. When only parents of children in public schools were surveyed, 84% favored

such instruction, 12% opposed it, and 4% gave no answer (Gallup, 1975).

What is Responsible Citizenship?

The term "responsible citizenship" means different things to different persons. It could connote having knowledge about how our society functions, how our government was formed, and how it operates; or law-and-order-oriented behaviors; or overt political involvement and action; or the motivation and rationale underlying specific behaviors and actions of responsible citizenship. Indeed, the addition of one component might exclude the possibility of adding another.

Knowledge

If a responsible citizen is defined as a person knowledgeable in the area of government, law, and politics, then instruction and evaluation could be directed primarily at recall. For example:

- Name the two senators from your state.
- Name the three branches of government.
- What is meant by a system of checks and balances?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) uses exactly this approach. Some of its findings in 1976 were:

- Fourteen percent of the 17-year-olds and 12% of the 13-year-olds thought the President of the United States does not always have to obey the law.
- Only about half of the 17-year-olds knew that each state has two U.S. senators and that the number of U.S. representatives from each state is determined by the state's population.

- About half of both the 13- and 17-year-olds knew that the President cannot appoint people to Congress. (NAEP, 1977)

Questions of interpretation and analysis go beyond simply evaluating citizenship knowledge. "What were the primary causes of the Civil War?" or "How have unions affected the political scene in the past two decades?" are questions that tap biases vis-à-vis race, socioeconomic level, geographic location, and so on. Such value-laden issues are particularly susceptible to the influence of the teacher's and/or textbook's perspective. They are not factual issues which one does or does not know.

Perhaps the most important consideration related to citizenship knowledge about government is: Is knowledge a necessary and sufficient condition for the acquisition and exercise of habits and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship? Must students know about these elements to be good citizens? If so, then able students probably have more knowledge than the less able and will therefore be better citizens. There is also evidence that good students eventually become more politically active than will low-ability students. However, there has been little research specifically designed to determine if a causal relationship exists between a student's knowledge about citizenship and that student's citizenship behaviors.

Behaviors

If responsible citizenship is defined by behaviors or actions, then one must identify those actions deemed to reflect responsible citizenship. There is a wide variety of possibilities for doing so. For

example:

- Do you (will you, should you) vote?
- Do you (would you) write to your state representative about a concern?
- Do you (would you) support, by contributions or effort, a candidate for public office?
- Would you (should you) report a shoplifter?
- Do you (would you) drive faster than 55 miles per hour?
- Do you (would you) report to the Internal Revenue Service income derived from helping a neighbor build a garage?
- Do you stand when the national anthem is played at a ball game?
- Do you (would you, should you) go to the assistance of a boy being beaten by several gang members?

The first three items refer to political-involvement activities; 4, 5, and 6 are law-and-order types of behavior; and 7 and 8 are responsibility items.

Although we might agree that any or all of these examples could be cited as habits and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship, arriving at consensus about including them all in a definition is not so easily achieved. The person who habitually drives 70 miles per hour might be punctilious about standing for the national anthem, while the person who will neither stand for the anthem nor report the shoplifter might be the first to help someone being beaten by a gang.

A further consideration is the varying conditions under which an event occurs. For example, if all traffic is flowing smoothly at 60 miles per hour but the signs stipulate 55 miles per hour, should you slow down to 55 if that speed presents a traffic hazard? Is it possible that some of these items would be best answered with "maybe"?

Reason for Behaviors

A third mode for defining responsible citizenship could be to measure the motivations for actions. For example, Why would you not report the shoplifter? or, Why would you always drive 55 miles per hour?

Such a definition base might rest, in part, on the theoretical framework of developmental theories of cognitive moral reasoning. These theories suggest that as people mature their motivation for actions changes from trying to avoid punishment (e.g., the small child who generally is "good" so as not to be punished), through a period of reciprocity (e.g., "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine"), to a law-and-order orientation in which the need for laws to maintain social order is recognized along with the individual's duty to obey those laws. The developmentalists suggest a still higher stage where one's values and principles come into play as a motivational factor. Thus, if the law seems unjust, then, for the common good, one should attempt to change the law.

Pennsylvania's Definition of Responsible Citizenship: Educational Quality Assessment (EQA)

Pennsylvania's assessment of student citizenship (Goal V) is based upon measurement of behaviors which reflect societal responsibility. These are categorized as follows:

- Welfare and dignity of others

  Designed to measure concern for the feelings of others, willingness to protest unjust treatment of others, and the tendency to accept new people into a group. Also measured is the degree of restraint from teasing or degrading others.

- Respect for law and authority

  Designed to measure willingness to report law-breaking of others, obedience to authorities during emergencies, and willingness to prevent classroom disruptions. Also assessed is the degree of restraint from violent actions that could harm others or damage property.

- Personal responsibility and integrity

  Designed to measure willingness to honor self-made commitments to individuals or groups, willingness to take responsibility for one's own mistakes, and willingness to report mistakes made in one's favor. (Hertzog & Seiverling, 1976).

EQA items for fifth-grade students require yes, maybe, or no replies to specific statements. (The following representative questions, together with the percentages obtained in statewide testing, for this and other age groups are taken from Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1975, unpaged.)

- I would make fun of someone who played a game poorly.

  (7% yes; 21% maybe; 72% no)

- I would throw snowballs at a passing car if I knew that I wouldn't get caught.

  (13% yes; 17% maybe; 70% no)

- If I scratched a neighbor's car with a bicycle, I would keep quiet about it.

  (20% yes; 27% maybe; 53% no)

The eighth-grade test presents a story about two characters named Morton and Norma. Students are asked how they would react to varying conditions in that story. One story goes as follows:

> Norma is shopping in a store and sees a person taking some things from the shelf and placing them in a hidden bag. If I were Norma, I would report the thief to the store manager when I knew:
>
> - The store had overpriced goods and was not very honest.
>
>   (42% no; 27% maybe; 31% yes)
>
> - I would be asked to spend several days testifying at the person's trial.
>
>   (40% no; 32% maybe; 28% yes)
>
> - I would not be required to testify at the person's trial.
>
>   (32% no; 28% maybe; 40% yes)

For eleventh-grade students, a similar format is used except that Morton and Norma are deleted and the student is asked to respond yes, maybe, or no to the statement: I would report the thief to the store manager when I knew:

- The store had overpriced goods and was not very honest.

  (54% no: 25% maybe; 21% yes)

- I would be required to be a witness at the person's trial.

  (51% no; 30% maybe; 19% yes)

- The guilty person was a friend of mine.

  (65% no; 26% maybe; 9% yes)

Analysis of the items prompts several comments.

The students know the "right" answer and will give that answer. This may seem a reasonable hypothesis, but an examination of how students respond voids any such thought. For some items, as few as 9% gave the socially desirable answer.

The students lie or answer randomly. If students answer randomly, the questionnaire would not be internally consistent; that is, there would be no relationship between a student's answer on one item and his/her answers on the remaining items. But the instrument is demonstrably internally consistent (about .92). Again, if students lie, there would be no relationship between a student's score at different times (test-retest reliability)--unless the student remembers how he/she previously chose 57 answers out of 171 possible answers. The instrument has a proven test-retest reliability (about .84).

How do we know that students will do what they say they will do? This question obviously cannot be answered by creating the situations described in each story and observing whether the student actually reports the thief, or makes fun of the person, or throws rocks at windows during a protest, or whatever. More subtle ways must be employed to determine whether the test measures what it purports to measure (validity)--in this case, whether students behave in ways that generally reflect societal responsibility.

One such validity study trained teachers to identify student behaviors reflecting societal responsibility. The teachers then divided their class into two groups: those who did and those who did not seem to be responsible citizens (at least in class). When their Goal V assessment results were compared, those previously identified as responsible citizens scored higher.

Another validity study found that teen-age public school students scored higher on Goal V assessment than did similar-age institutionalized delinquents. In addition, the delinquents in the trustee (open) cottages scored higher than did those in the high-security cottages.

These validity studies suggest that the EQA Goal V instrument measures what it was intended to measure.

EQA Findings

The EQA scoring procedure gives a weight of 2 points for the most socially desirable response (yes, I would report the thief; no, I would not throw rocks during a protest); a weight of 1 point for maybe; and a weight of 0 for the most socially undesirable answer (no, I would not report the thief; yes, I would throw rocks during a protest).

On the basis of this weighting, school mean scores at all three grade levels steadily decreased from 1974 to 1975 to 1976 (Table 1). The consistency of this finding is indisputable.

There are three possible explanations for this decline. First, it may be that the approximately 50,000 students assessed at each grade

Table 1

EQA School Mean Scores on Goal V

Grade	Year		
	1974	1975	1976
Grade 5	47.91	47.22	46.54
Grade 8	59.90	58.38	56.23
Grade 11	62.89	61.36	59.02

level each year were a biased sample in a given year; that is, for one reason or another the group of students tested one year was considerably different from the group tested in the next year. However, examination of the data suggests this was not the case. The stratified sampling process used by EQA was designed to minimize the chance of obtaining a biased sample in any given year, and the results bear out the success of that process.

A second explanation is that students may currently have a greater tendency to select maybe rather than the most socially desirable response --perhaps an indication of increased insight. But this, too, was not the case. A review of the proportion of eleventh-grade and eighth-grade students selecting the various response choices (Table 2) indicates that over time more students were selecting the undesirable answer, fewer were selecting the desirable answer, and about the same number were selecting the maybe response. (Grade 5 scores are omitted because the items were somewhat different.)

Table 2

Proportion of Students Selecting EQA Goal V Responses

Response	Year		
	Grade 11		
	1974	1975	1976
Welfare and dignity of others			
Desirable	.389	.382	.365
Maybe	.303	.302	.297
Undesirable	.305	.313	.331
Respect for law and authority			
Desirable	.410	.401	.388
Maybe	.262	.260	.256
Undesirable	.325	.336	.353
Responsibility and integrity			
Desirable	.409	.383	.361
Maybe	.297	.300	.292
Undesirable	.291	.313	.340
Total Goal V			
Desirable	.403	.389	.372
Maybe	.286	.286	.280
Undesirable	.308	.321	.342

Table 2 (cont'd)

Proportion of Students Selecting EQA V Responses

Response	Year		
	Grade 8		
	1974	1975	1976
Welfare and dignity of others			
Desirable	.428	.408	.386
Maybe	.312	.318	.314
Undesirable	.260	.270	.294
Respect for law and authority			
Desirable	.389	.374	.360
Maybe	.289	.294	.293
Undesirable	.316	.328	.345
Responsibility and integrity			
Desirable	.391	.371	.345
Maybe	.295	.303	.300
Undesirable	.312	.322	.347
Total Goal V			
Desirable	.400	.382	.362
Maybe	.297	.304	.301
Undesirable	.299	.301	.322

A third possible explanation is simply that more students are choosing the undesirable behavior, i.e., societal responsibility may, in fact, be declining. One cannot be absolutely sure this is the case. However, since the data refute the other two reasonable explanations, the actual decline in scores may reflect a real change in behavior. A review of some item data provides an insight into specific situations presented on the assessment instrument. (It should be noted that no observational techniques have been employed to measure a change in the number of students actually performing in the manner they say they would.)

There was considerable variation among schools on many items, particularly those related to behavior at school. In some schools as few as 3% of the students would not sneak a book from the library (in other schools over half say they would not); less than 1% would report to the principal the names of students who wrecked the school cafeteria and kitchen (up to 40% in other schools would report such students); and about 3% would try to keep friends from taunting another student (up to 40% in other schools would try to prevent such behavior). On a law-related item, as few as 8% would report a shoplifter to the store manager (1% if it were a friend), while in other schools over one-third of the students would report such an incident.

On the more positive side, in every school at least one third of the students would report to authorities a waiter who would not serve a person of another race (this reaches 100% in some schools); at least one third would obey the orders of a policeman at the scene of a fire;

and a similar percentage would refrain from throwing rocks at windows during a protest (both of these reach 90% in some schools).

Another way of looking at the data is to calculate the proportion of students within each grade level answering over half the Goal V items in a socially desirable manner. Seventy-three percent of the fifth-grade students did so. In secondary school, however, only 19% of the eighth-grade students and 21% of the eleventh-grade students met this criterion. In other words, at the secondary level, four out of five students selected more maybe and undesirable responses than desirable responses. This decreasing pattern seen with school mean scores was also evident in the criterion-referencing scores.

The proportion of fifth-grade students responding in a socially desirable way to more than half of the items was 79% in 1974, 23% in 1975, and finally 19% in 1976. In eleventh grade this proportion decreased from 27% to 25% to 21%.

Related Home and School Variables

Several interesting relationships emerge between school location and certain home and school variables (Table 3).

As children mature, various pressures and environmental conditions have different degrees of influence upon their behaviors. This is clearly evident when looking at the correlation coefficient in Table 3. The larger the grade enrollment in farming areas, medium-size cities, and large cities at the fifth-grade and eighth-grade levels, the lower the societal-responsibility score. In grade 11 this negative pattern was reversed: In other words, the larger the enrollment in a given school,

Table 3

Correlations Using School Mean Scores: 1974-76 Composite

School location	Home/School Variable: Grade enrollment	Socioeconomic background[a]	% white students	Parents' attitude toward school
Grade 5				
Farming areas	-.08	-.08	-.09	.39
Small towns	-.01	.04	.12	.42
Suburban	.03	-.01	.09	.35
Medium-size cities	-.17	.13	.28	.42
Large cities	-.19	.36	.52	.54
Grade 8				
Farming areas	-.17	-.22	.29	.44
Small towns	-.12	-.09	.26	.43
Suburban	-.01	-.10	.15	.22
Medium-size cities	-.19	-.002	.08	.42
Large cities	-.38	-.08	-.03	.31
Grade 11				
Farming areas	.16	.06	.40	.60
Small towns	-.16	-.05	.33	.45
Suburban	.01	.25	.24	.38
Medium-size cities	.29	.41	.14	.59
Large cities	.22	.48	.15	.05

[a]Socioeconomic background was measured by the occupation of the fathers or male guardians.

the better the societal-responsibility score. For suburban schools, there was no significant relationship.

Perhaps eleventh-grade students have matured to the extent that they can cope with larger groups of people in their community, or perhaps by then the low-scoring students have dropped out of school. It is conceivable that students in high schools with a large enrollment may learn to be more responsible to society. It is clear, however, that elementary and junior high schools with large enrollments tend to have low citizenship scores.

For fifth-grade students, socioeconomic background had little effect upon scores except in large cities, where the high socioeconomic schools tended to have higher Goal V scores. In grade 8 the relationships were all negative, but only in farming areas was the coefficient significant. The strongest relationship was found in the eleventh-grade suburban, medium-size city, and large city schools, where the higher the socioeconomic background of students, the better their societal responsibility.

The ratio of white to nonwhite students was related to Goal V scores. Medium-size and large city schools with a high proportion of white students in the fifth grade tended to have high societal-responsibility scores. This was in contrast with junior and senior high schools, where a large proportion of white students related to high Goal V scores only in areas of low population density.

The only variable having a consistent relationship was students'

perception of their parents' attitudes toward school. Where these attitudes were seen as supportive of the schools, Goal V scores tended to be high at all grade levels and in all types of communities, except for eleventh grade in large city schools.

Characteristics of High-Scoring Schools

In those elementary schools where fifth-grade students scored high on Goal V the following characteristics obtained:

- Attendance tended to be good.
- The student body had a proportionately higher percent of white students.
- Students generally reported their parents as being supportive of the schools.
- Proportionately less money was spent on instructional costs.
- Students resided in sparsely populated areas.
- Students generally had a high understanding and appreciation of others of another race, religion, or socioeconomic status.
- Mathematics skills, verbal skills, and health knowledge tended to be high.
- Students had an above-average appreciation of human accomplishments.
- Students adapted well to changing conditions.

In junior high or middle schools where eighth-grade students scored high on Goal V, the following characteristics obtained:

- Students generally came from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

- Proportionately less money was spent on instructional costs.
- Students resided in sparsely populated areas.
- Teachers tended to have less than an average number of advanced college credits.
- Students generally had above-average understanding and appreciation of others of another race, religion, and socioeconomic status.
- Interest in school and learning tended to be high.
- Habits and attitudes related to health and safety tended to be high.
- Students had an above-average appreciation of human accomplishments.
- Students adapted well to changing conditions.

In high schools where eleventh-grade students scored high on Goal V, the following characteristics obtained:

- Attendance tended to be good.
- Teachers came from a wide geographic area.
- Students resided in sparsely populated areas.
- Students generally had a greater understanding of others of another race, religion, or socioeconomic status.
- Mathematics skills tended to be high.
- Interest in school and learning tended to be high.
- Habits and attitudes related to health and safety tended to be good.

- Students tended to have a favorable attitude toward work and selecting a career.
- Students had a better than average appreciation of human accomplishments.
- Students adapted well to changing conditions.

Summary

There is almost universal agreement that something called responsible citizenship should be an integral part of the educational process. There is not universal agreement as to a definition of responsible citizenship. EQA has taken the stand that an organized democratic society requires that citizens respect the law, assume responsibilities that accompany their many constitutional rights, and be aware of and concerned about the welfare and dignity of other citizens. Survival of a free society depends upon this concept of citizenship.

Over the past three years there has been a continuing decline both in EQA school mean scores on Goal V and in the proportion of students who answer the majority of EQA items in a socially desirable way. The eighth- and eleventh-grade responses are particularly disconcerting: only about one student in five met the modest criterion of answering more than half the items in a socially desirable way.

The greatest decrease from 1974 to 1976 was in the area of responsibility and integrity. More and more students were not willing to take responsibility for their actions, particularly if no one were to know

about it, e.g., reporting that he/she broke a window, scratched a car, or got a higher test grade due to a mistake in scoring. The other two areas--respect for law and authority, and welfare and dignity of others--decreased nearly as much.

These findings cannot be rationalized away by questioning the reliability or validity of the instruments. The technical characteristics clearly support the appropriateness of the battery.

The notion that students are becoming more reflective and have a greater tendency to select the maybe response rather than the socially desirable response is also not confirmed by the data.

With reference to those supporters of developmental theories who suggest that we measure not actions or behaviors but rather reasons for behaviors, there are several studies that tentatively indicate a significant positive relationship between levels of cognitive moral development and scores on the current Goal V instrument; that is, those students giving the socially desirable responses appear to be doing so because of higher or more social/moral cognitive reasoning.

While the overall causes for these decreases in societal responsibility are not clear, certain conjectures are immediately suggested. The 17,000 hours of TV that students watch by the time they graduate might have some effect. Unions, minority groups, politicians, and others who break the law and whose crimes are exonerated through a pardon, negotiation, or plea bargaining certainly do not set a socially responsible example. An increasing divorce rate probably has decreased the traditional

role of the family in transmitting responsibility to children, while the alleged waning influence of religious institutions is not clear.

The role of the school has changed very little in the last decade with respect to teaching children to be responsible citizens. With forces at work tending to decrease socially desirable behaviors, the schools may well be the last line of defense against continued erosion of a sense of civic responsibility in our youth--and in our future citizens.

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Biography

CARL A. GUERRIERO received the D.Ed. degree from The Pennsylvania State University and is currently coordinator for dissemination and utilization of Educational Quality Assessment, the state assessment program of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Prior to his current position, Dr. Guerriero was a teacher and administrator in the public schools. He has written widely on assessment findings, priority setting, teaching strategies, and curriculum development. Dr. Guerriero's professional activities parallel his interest in the assessment of societal responsibility and a search for promising interventions related to good citizenship.